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REPORT
CD NO.

50X1-HUM

COUNTRY	North Korea	DATE OF INFORMATION	1947-1948
SUBJECT	Economic		
HOW PUBLISHED	Monthly periodicals	DATE DIST.	27 May 1949
WHERE PUBLISHED	Pyongyang, Korea	NO. OF PAGES	3
DATE PUBLISHED	25 Aug 1947, 5 Jun 1948	SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.	
LANGUAGE	Korean		

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SOURCE Taechung Kwahak; Sae Chosun.

THE HWANGHAE IRONWORKS

The reconstruction of the blast furnace at the nationalized Hwanghae Ironworks was begun early in 1947 along with the construction of new coke ovens and an open-hearth furnace. The subsequent announcement of the manufacturing of heavy-steel plate by the rolling mill was outstanding news, particularly since Korean technicians in this field were extremely scarce. The success is due largely to the efficient management of Chung Won-mo former director of the Hwanghae Ironworks, Chang Ik-im, present director, and Kim Hyung-kul, deputy director.

Japanese engineers estimated that the above installation work would take at least 60 days, while Korean workers estimated it at 40 days. The Soviet military occupation authorities in Songim insisted on 20 days. The work was actually completed in 20 days.

Moved by patriotic enthusiasm of the workers, the Soviet military authorities decided to transport over 10,000 tons of North China coal to the Hwanghae Ironworks, to search for coking specialists among the Soviet military personnel, and to survey closely the coal mines in Manchuria as far as North and South Saghalien in search of the proper type of coal needed at the mill.

Meanwhile, the Hwanghae Ironworks was busily engaged in overhauling essential facilities. Important repairs during that year included pipes for gas-generating furnace, reinforcement work on the water pipes at Yongdu-ri, and reconstruction of the No 1 open-hearth furnace, and the thin-plate finishing furnace. During 1947, repairs were also made on the heavy-plate reheating furnace, rolling-mill heating furnace, No 1 and No 2 coke ovens, No 3 open-hearth furnace, and No 2 sintering furnace.

In the steel-manufacturing department, it was necessary to operate the gas-generating furnace without any special kind of coal. For the open-hearth furnace, the period of combustion was lengthened to the standard 10 hours and 20 minutes. Improvements were made on the thin-plate rollers, which would solve the supply problem of thin-plate steel which is scarce in Korea.

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In the coking department, obtaining of high temperature for the blast furnace with producer gas alone was thought doubtful, but eventually it became possible to produce fine-quality coke.

The ceramics department has succeeded in making firebricks used for the base of the blast furnace. Hitherto, either, German- or Japanese-made bricks have been used. The hand manufacture of slaked lime has been changed to manufacture by means of electric power. The heating of the drying chamber and the cooling of bricks have been worked out by means of ventilation, which reduced the processing time to half of that required by the Japanese.

The engineering department originated a special type of oxygen pipe-punch press. This invention helped to speed up the manufacturing operation by about one ninth of the ordinary time required in processing pipes, which are in great demand in Korea.

In the power department, two sets of DC motors were used, but they broke down several times a month. However, a good overhauling made it possible to use them 3 months in succession without serious trouble.

In the testing department, where the thin plates are cut according to specifications, a new plate-shearing device employing small, chevron-shaped steel [blades] has been installed recently to bring up the percentage of finished products. The new device not only improved the work but saved as much as one third of the time that was required previously.

The most notable achievement of the Hwanghae Ironworks has been the reconstruction of the No 3 blast furnace, and the manufacture of pig iron for the first time since the liberation in February 1948.

Various technical difficulties had to be overcome before the furnace was restored to working condition. With the improvement of transportation, the supply of limestone and other raw materials for steel has been steadily increased. The supply of coke in quantity, however, remained a problem. And at one time, the reconstruction of the No 3 blast furnace appeared hopeless. It was at that crucial moment that Kim Il Sung expressed his special concern over the situation, and ordered Direcotr Chung to do his best to solve the problem.

The reconstruction of the above furnace began on 19 February 1947. As the work was done mostly without mechanical aids, and the workers had to be careful not to damage the essential mechanism of the furnace, the work was not completed until 29 November 1947. On 3 December 1947, a ceremony marking the commencement of pig-iron manufacture took place, attended by Kim Il Sung, Kim Doo-bong, Lee Moon-whan, Minister of Industry, Chung Won-mo, then director of the mill, now chief of Bureau of Nonlustrous Metal, and many dignitaries from the Soviet Occupation Army.

The reconstruction of the No 1 blast furnace, the same size as the No 3 furnace, began in March 1948, and is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

The status of individual plants at the Hwanghae Ironworks as of 15 August 1947, was as follows:

Shaft Furnace

Construction of a 150-ton shaft furnace at the cost of several million won was in progress as of 15 August 1947. It was expected to be completed in July 1948.

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Open-Hearth Furnace

Since the beginning of the operation of the 5-ton open-hearth furnace on 2 January 1947, the production of steel ingots exceeded the production goal for the year /by August/. Behind this achievement lies a great technical improvement.

Large Plate Plant

This plant is equipped with a 4,000-horsepower roller machine. The first run of this roller was made on 25 February 1947. The original plant to open the steel-ingot reheating furnace in the latter part of February 1947 was delayed until 25 August 1947.

Heavy-Plate Plant

This plant rates next to the above plate plant and is equipped with a 3,000-horsepower roller. Both heavy and thin plates of several inches thickness are processed here. Two plate-shearing machines work almost constantly, and the production record is good.

Thin-Plate Plant

This plant is the pride of the Hwanghae Ironworks. Before liberation, the maximum daily output did not exceed 15 tons, but with the subsequent expansion of facilities, the maximum daily output reached 35 tons as of 15 March 1947. Demand for products of this plant, which include iron, zinc, brass, copper, aluminum plates, and galvanized metal plates, is great.

Rolling Mill

This plant, also improved after the liberation, now produces 7 tons of 12-millimeter round steel bars daily. This output is expected to be increased to 10 tons.

Coking Plant

Of the four coking ovens, the No 2 oven is already in use, while repairs on the No 1 oven are expected to be completed during August 1947. The products of this plant are coke, pitch, and by-products including sulfuric acid, ammonium sulfate, menthol, coal tar, heavy oil, naphthalene, etc.

Today, there has been a movement launched by the plant executives to popularize technical knowledge and skill among the workers. There were 372 workers trained at the Hwanghae Ironworks Technical Training Center during 1947.

Kim Il Sung ordered the construction of ten apartment buildings for the workers. Three of the apartments, composed of two-story concrete buildings at Cholsan-ni are 40 percent complete. Improvement of food supply for the workers has been also sought.

As for the labor situation, the 1947 statistics indicated that the labor supply could fulfill all but 19 percent of the demand. This is due largely to the patriotic cooperation of the local political, trade, and educational institutions which supplied labor power. It goes without saying that these concrete facts are prima-facie evidence of the favorable state of the North, where industries are flourishing and demands are promptly met, in contrast with the South, where industries are shrinking and unemployment is mounting.

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